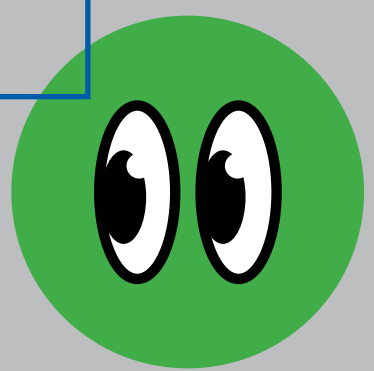




GOOD VIBES

YOUR
GUIDE
TO
ALCOHOL-
FREE
EVENTS





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DISCLAIMER: The information contained in this resource is intended as a general guide. All reasonable measures have been taken to ensure that the information is current and accurate. The Health Promotion Agency and Zeal will not accept liability for any action taken in reliance on this document.



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HELLO!

Welcome to our guide to organising epic alcohol-free events for young people!

This resource provides advice for anyone who is looking to organise a successful **alcohol-free** event for young people.

An event can be any size – from a small, cosy club dinner for 20 to a medium-sized event with 200 people attending a school ball to a large event attracting over 500 attendees.



WHY BE ALCOHOL-FREE?

Alcohol can have negative impacts on a person's health, finances and relationships. Research has shown that a young person's brain is still developing into their early twenties, and brains that are still developing don't mix well with alcohol.

Alcohol can harm young people by:

- affecting their performance at school or work.
- affecting their health.
- increasing their chances of getting injured or into trouble.
- increasing the chance that they will do things they may regret later, for example, having unwanted or unsafe sex or buying something they can't afford.

For more information about how alcohol can affect a young person's life, see the Health Promotion Agency's resource *Alcohol & your kids* or [online information for parents on \[alcohol.org.nz\]\(https://www.health.govt.nz/our-services/health-promotion/young-people/online-information-for-parents-on-alcohol.org.nz\)](https://www.health.govt.nz/our-services/health-promotion/young-people/online-information-for-parents-on-alcohol.org.nz)

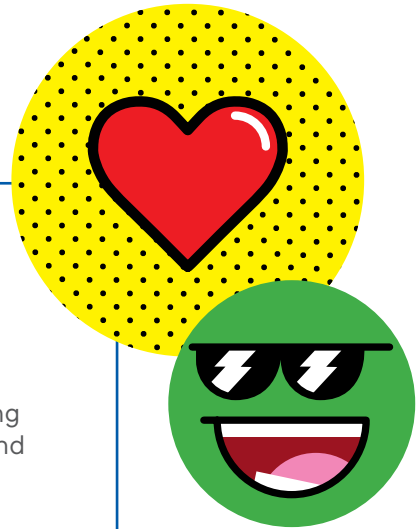
Perhaps because of this, research shows that since 2001 more young people have been choosing to delay taking up drinking until they are older, or choosing not to drink at all.

You can support this promising trend by organising more awesome alcohol-free events that help build young people's confidence and understanding that they don't need alcohol to have an amazing time.

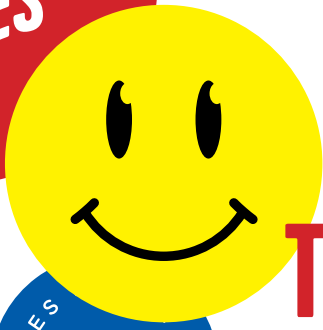
NOTES

While this resource focuses on alcohol-free events, some of the tips included on the following pages could also be useful ideas for anyone looking to organise a family gathering or private party without alcohol.

This resource is not a comprehensive guide to event management. For more detailed information on event management, please see 'Helpful resources' at the end of the guide.



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THE PROS OF RUNNING ALCOHOL-FREE EVENTS

Why would you even want to have alcohol at your event when there are so many positives to being alcohol-free?

Here are **eight** great reasons for making your event alcohol-free.

- 1** Alcohol-free events are easier to organise; you don't need to apply for and get special licences to handle and/or sell alcohol.
- 2** Alcohol-free events are easier to manage and control. There's less chance of things going wrong (getting out of hand and having to deal with drunk, unpredictable people). Plus alcohol-free events are easier to clean up after!
- 3** Alcohol-free is healthier on so many levels: preventing damage to developing brains; reducing the level of violence; reducing the risk of attendees drinking and driving before and after the event.
- 4** The pressure is removed for those who don't want to drink.
- 5** You don't have the hassle of trying to work out who is over 18 years of age and can legally be sold or supplied alcohol and who isn't and all the other things you need to know and legally abide by if alcohol is available and under 18s are present.
- 6** There's a positive buzz to organising an alcohol-free event because you know you are doing something good for your community – helping create a great atmosphere for everyone without the burden of alcohol or other drugs.
- 7** Everyone can focus on the fun event rather than on how much alcohol they should be drinking and how to dodge the messy drunks.
- 8** There are no unpleasant public scenes of drunkenness to deal with.

When you organise an awesome alcohol-free event, you can be certain everyone will remember the fun they had for days to come – and the positive vibe can last a long time.



“We need to make efforts to change the way young people perceive alcohol. The first step to seeing this happen is to provide alternatives, like going to see live music, creating safe spaces for youth and amping up the all-ages gig scene, and then I think we’ll create a gradual cultural shift away from drinking.”

GRACE STRATTON

STUDENT / LIVE MUSIC ENTHUSIAST / BLOGGER

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HOW TO MAKE YOUR ALCOHOL-FREE EVENT EPIC



DEVELOP A SHARED VISION

Work with young people to come up with a vision for the event that young people will be really excited about attending. Encourage everyone to share their ideas of things that they enjoy and that they know will inspire their friends to come along. Discuss not only what is feasible but also why things might not work (too expensive, too big for the venue, etc) so that everyone feels that they have been taken seriously and can learn from others' experience.

A combination of experience in running events and understanding the audience's needs is a winning mix for a great event organisation team.

WORK WITH THE A TEAM

Pulling together the right organisational team is vital to the success of your event. Everyone on the team must believe in the benefits of providing an alcohol-free event for young people and be motivated to see the event succeed.

SAY WHAT YOU MEAN, MEAN WHAT YOU SAY

Send out a consistent message – not just through your promotional material but also through what your event provides and how the people associated with the event conduct themselves.

Provide clear, firm expectations up front for your organising team and the event.

CHECK IN WITH YOUR REALITY RADAR

Be honest, positive and open about what your intended audience will get from your event. People want to know that they are going to be engaged and entertained and that the event will be a great way to connect with their friends.

Successful alcohol-free youth events involve young people at all stages, from design and planning to delivery.

“Young people love things that they can take ownership of, and they know the difference between being the ‘token’ voice in the group and truly participating in the planning & implementation.”

**TEACHER RURAL HIGH
SCHOOL ANNUAL BALL
COMMITTEE**

COMMUNICATE CLEARLY

Make sure your publicity about the event is clear and enthusiastic, so that people will feel like they could be missing out on something great if they don't join in.

DRESS THE VENUE

The cooler your event's venue, the more likely the attendees will want to stay. For example, many schools use their school halls for their senior balls. Hang black-out curtains and decorations to transform the space from its everyday appearance and size into something special. Decorate the space differently each year – never repeat a winning theme. The audience will know what themes have been used before, and they will want something new to mark them as unique and better than their predecessors.

Create a striking entrance

For example, for medium to large events, you could hire a red carpet entrance, balloon arches, fairy-light tunnels or an inflatable tunnel to go at the entrance and create a great first impression. Photographers, interviews and announcements as attendees enter the venue will add to the excitement.

MAKE THE FUN LAST


Consider extending the duration of the event by providing a range of engaging activities throughout the event that will keep it upbeat and flowing. You could have a prize giving for the best theme dress, arrange high-energy bands and artists who engage with their audience, find a charismatic young person from your community to be master of ceremonies (MC) or a DJ who can create a great playlist of songs that your audience will relate to.

PILE ON THE GREAT FOOD AND NON-ALCOHOLIC DRINKS

Put some style into how you provide your refreshments

Dress up your refreshment tables with clean, professional table cloths and make non-alcoholic drinks fun and appealing.

Consider decorating the table with fairy lights or lit-up LED ice cubes or imitation roses to either sit on the table or float in the punch bowl. Hire theme tumblers that are attractive or have novelty appeal (such as battery-operated flashing plastic glasses).



Plan an epic event, and your audience will be too busy enjoying themselves to think about alcohol.

THE PLANNING STAGE

As Benjamin Franklin said "if you fail to plan you are planning to fail" so the first step to delivering a successful alcohol-free event is to write an 'event plan'.

IDENTIFY YOUR AUDIENCE

Think about the age group you want attending your event, where they come from and what connects them. Work out why they would be interested in attending your event. For example, Are you organising a religious, cultural or community event? Or is it for a particular hobby or sport, like the netball team's end-of-season party, or for a special day that is important to a particular group of people, such as a birthday or leaving party for a school friend? Make sure your event hits the mark for its audience.

DEFINE THE SIZE

It's important to have a good idea of how many people you expect at your event to allow you to prepare adequate catering, parking, signs, transport, toileting, etc.

DELEGATE ROLES

Make sure your organising team includes people from a range of ages – to provide the right mix of fresh ideas and past experiences.

Make up detailed checklists of tasks for each role and a clear timeframe for completing the tasks. You might need to consider roles for:

- arranging entertainment and food
- organising parking and transport
- organising the venue
- promoting the event
- controlling the budget
- coordinating health, safety and security at event
- organising clean-up at the end.

Communicate well.
It's easy to make an event completely alcohol-free if everyone knows beforehand and is reminded throughout the event.



"Have a tightly organised team and clear, consistent, firm expectations for both your team and your entertainment"

TANE, MC
SMOKEFREE ROCKQUEST

HEALTH, SAFETY AND SECURITY

- All event organisers have a duty to make sure everyone who attends their event behaves well and stays safe throughout the event. Make sure you develop a safety plan for your event.
- Events that provide lots of good food and non-alcoholic drinks (including water) support young people's wellbeing and encourage confidence that they are being appreciated and cared for.
- Set out the food and drink in an obvious and accessible space.
- If you are taking tickets and money, issuing wristbands, checking ID etc, make sure you have assigned enough people to work together on the entrance process.
- For medium to large events, decide on a suitable system for checking the attendees' movements – for example, a signing-in-and-out system or a one-way system, which means if a person leaves, they can't come back in (this is the recommended system).
- Make sure you have a prearranged plan for dealing with problems. If you are organising a medium to large event (more than 200 attendees), it may be a good idea to notify your local Police, especially if they have an online party register, beforehand so they can be prepared in case anything goes wrong. Keep the contact phone number for the Police clearly displayed for event staff to refer to quickly if they need to.
- Event security is important at medium to large events. Don't use young people as security staff – security staff need to be older and more assertive to be effective and to give parents a sense of confidence in your event.
- Most events have an area that attendees can go to when they need support and where organisers can keep an eye on anyone who is not well until their parents can pick them up or they can be sent home safely. It's best to have a qualified first-aider on hand at the support area.
- At medium to large events, as well as the main event area, you may want to consider providing chill-out zones, which can be helpful stress-free places where attendees can go for a bit of time out – perhaps an acoustic café or garage lounge.

MAKE YOUR MESSAGE CLEAR: NO ALCOHOL OR OTHER DRUGS!

- Ensure you have enough signs to post at the entrance to your event that clearly state this is an alcohol-free event. ('Alcohol-free area' logos and templates are available from the Health Promotion Agency's Alcohol webpage, see 'Helpful resources' at the end of the guide).
- 'No alcohol and other drugs' checks: At medium to large events, have a system at the entrance for security staff to check for and stop alcohol and other drugs coming in.
- Make sure all staff/event organisers know how to handle someone who is trying to bring in alcohol or other drugs. For example, start with a polite verbal warning and advise the person that they won't be allowed to enter and will need to leave the premises. If this doesn't work, escalate the issue and call in extra help if required – parents, teachers or community leaders in the first instance or the Police. If the person is under 18 years old, make sure all staff/event organisers know what your event plan is for handling such situations, for example, ringing the parents to come and collect the young person.

THE PLANNING STAGE

CONT'D

BUDGET

It is very common to underestimate the costs and overestimate the income when planning an event. Make a list or spreadsheet of all the expected costs for your event and include a buffer of at least 10% extra to your budget, to cover the unexpected.

You may find that an alcohol-free event will be cheaper to run than the same event with alcohol.

BRINGING IN THE TALENT

Your event may involve hiring different forms of entertainment: performers, DJs, comedians, amusement park attractions such as photo booths, decorations, etc. Book the entertainment options well in advance to avoid missing out.

Make sure any entertainers you book are aware of your alcohol and other drug-free policy and will abide by it. Clearly explain your expectations for their language and behaviour during the event and the fact that they will be role models who don't need alcohol or other drugs to make their entertainment great. Include these details in any contract you draw up and when talking with the entertainers and their managers.

LEAD-UP TO THE BIG DAY

The final few days before the event are the time to make sure everything is ready to go.

Check through the organisation team's role checklists and make sure everyone knows their roles and responsibilities, the safety plan and who to go to with any issues or problems.

Wear your alcohol-free status with pride – if you are confident your event can be alcohol-free and great, everyone else will be confident too.



PROMOTING YOUR EVENT

Once you've planned your event, it's time to promote it to your audience. Timing is everything at this stage – if you announce your event too early, people may forget about it; if you announce it too late, there won't be enough time for details to get out there.

As a rough guide, for an event of up to 100 people, allow three weeks of promotional time. You will need to allow more time for larger events; exactly how much depends on how many people you want to attract.

Consider promoting your event through social media as well as your own website, newsletters, radio, newspapers, posters hung around school, community halls and town, and word of mouth. Remember, though – the more widely you promote it, the more people you can expect to attend.

Young people involved in the event planning can also be great at promoting the event to other young people. You might even consider incentivising local champions to promote the event or to sell tickets.

It is important that your promotion puts out two clear messages:

- The event is going to be amazing! It is going to be engaging, entertaining, energetic and a great way to connect with friends.
- The event is strictly free of alcohol and other drugs.

Reiterate these messages on event posters and your social media event pages. You don't have to make the term 'alcohol-free' the loudest message in your promotions, but it needs to come through every medium – to show that alcohol and other drugs won't be tolerated at your event.

Some events include clear statements on their promotional materials, such as: *'People trying to bring alcohol or other drugs into this event will be turned away.'*

ON THE BIG DAY

FIRST IN, LAST OUT

Be organised. Make sure everyone on the organising team knows to arrive early to help set up, knows their role and responsibilities, and knows to stick around for the clean-up.

REMEMBER YOUR EVENT PLAN AND FOLLOW IT!



THE CLEAN-UP

PACK DOWN

There is a lot involved in cleaning up after any event, but 'many hands make light work'. Make sure your event plan includes details of what is involved in the clean-up and who is responsible for the various tasks.

Now is the time to reflect on how much easier it is to clean up after an event that is alcohol-free than an event with alcohol involved!

Collect and securely store any money from the event promptly. Once the event is over, have two people count all money and bank it as quickly as possible.

THANKS

Thank everyone involved – volunteers, entertainers and the organising team – and make sure you celebrate the successes with everyone.

It's not just your audience who should be leaving the event buzzing.

EVALUATE THE EVENT

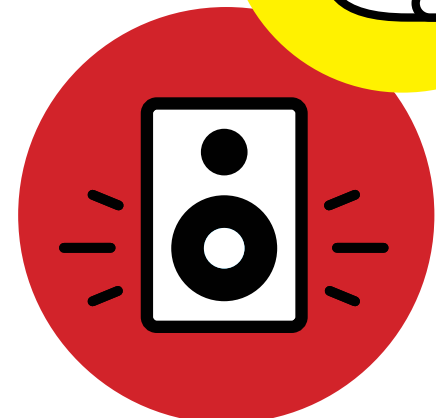
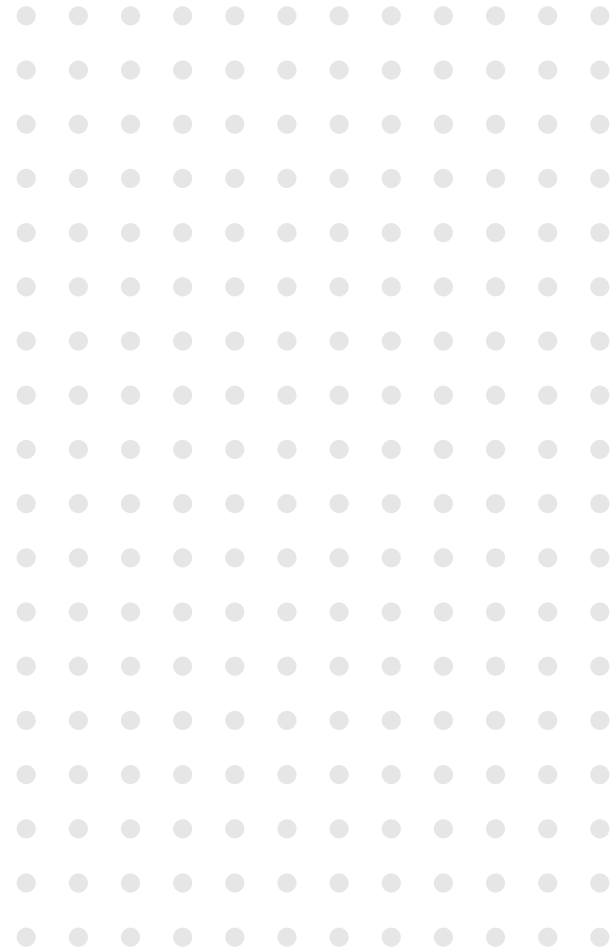
Evaluation is essential to see if you've reached your event goals – particularly if you plan to repeat the event. Debrief with the organising team soon after the event (people tend to forget quickly) and write up a summary that can be used to inform the next event.

An evaluation can help the team think about:

- how successful the event was without alcohol
- how easy it was to enforce the alcohol-free status
- how the team dealt with any alcohol problems and if there are ways to deal with problems better next time
- ideas to improve future alcohol-free events.

SUMMARISE THE EVENT

Highlight the positives of your alcohol-free event in your team debrief and promote them to the community through post-event press releases for newsletters and radio reports/social media posts.



“The ball arrivals are one of the highlights of the evening, and every year the way the students are delivered to the hall entrance becomes more elaborate and creative. Grandad’s vintage car, a scooter with flashing lights, a cardboard limousine, and a tractor... We even set up bleachers one year so that parents, whānau and community members could watch the procession.”

TEACHER

RURAL HIGH SCHOOL

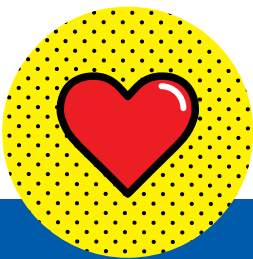
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EXAMPLES OF FANTASTIC ALCOHOL-FREE EVENTS AND ORGANISATIONS

- [Smokefree Rockquest](#)
- [ZEAL](#) a not-for-profit youth organisation dedicated to helping young kiwis discover, express and develop their unique creativity
- [FReeZA](#) gigs, dance parties and cultural events in Australia

HELPFUL RESOURCES

- Free-to-use alcohol-free logos and templates: alcohol.org.nz
- Licence requirements for using recorded music: onemusicnz.com
- Police: [Alcohol and other drug guidelines](#)
- Hart's Ladder of Participation: [A youth participation model to help organisations encourage young people to participate more in their projects.](#)



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